

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: October 12, 2017

Agenda Item: 2018 Brucellosis Annual Work Plan

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 Min

Background

In January 2013, the Commission endorsed elk management recommendations from a citizen working group for use in areas with brucellosis (the Designated Surveillance Area as described by the Montana Department of Livestock). Annual work plans describe specific management actions based upon these recommendations. Management efforts during 2016/2017 included two stackyards in the Dillon area, hazing efforts in the Paradise Valley and west of Bozeman, and limited kill permits in the Paradise Valley (no elk were killed). The proposed 2018 annual work plan largely restates the 2017 plan to include hazing, limited fencing, limited lethal removal of elk, habitat modifications, and other efforts to adjust elk distribution away from cattle at small scales to mitigate the risk of brucellosis transmission from elk to cattle. The proposed 2018 plan also clarifies/restates elements of the previous work plan and adds fence modifications to reduce impacts to existing fences when hazing elk away from cattle. The original proposal identified new dates to coincide with Department of Livestock dates but those dates include livestock testing periods. Subsequent conversations with FWP field staff and Montana Department of Livestock has resulted in new proposed dates of January 15 – June 30. Previous plans used June 15. Other proposed changes since the August adoption include additional clarifying edits and an adjustment to fence modifications to clarify and make consistent application in the field.

Public Involvement Process & Results

The public comment opportunity for the proposed annual work plan ran from the August 10 Commission meeting through September 18. Four comments were received and forwarded to the Commission. Both opposition and support for the proposed plan were represented in the comments.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends adoption of the proposed 2018 annual work plan that largely restates earlier plans and includes a new option for potential modifications of existing fences to limit damage from hazing elk. The new plan also represents a slight modification to dates.

Alternatives and Analysis

The proposal may be adopted as presented or with adjustment per FWP justifications, public comment, and Commission discussion.

Proposed Motion

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the final 2018 annual work plan for elk management in areas with brucellosis as proposed by FWP.